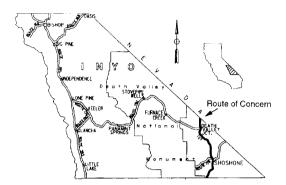
Radioactive Waste Transportation on State Route 127

Location Map:



Description: Potential use of State Route 127 for the shipment of high-level, transuranic (waste containing radioactive elements heavier than uranium), or low-level radioactive waste to and from the Nevada Test Site under three different U. S. Department of Energy programs has raised concerns about safety, emergency response, and public perception of risk. Although current discussions involve low-level radioactive waste, routing these materials on SR 127 may set a precedent for future high-level waste shipments.

Background: The U. S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Nevada Test Site (NTS) has been the recipient of low-level radioactive waste from other federal sites for 30 years. In addition, the DOE is storing federal transuranic wastes at the NTS for ultimate shipment to and disposal at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico. Finally, Yucca Mountain, adjacent to the NTS, is the only site under consideration for disposal of spent fuel from the nation's commercial power reactors and high-level waste from federal generators.

Traditionally, radioactive materials to and from the NTS have traveled through southern Nevada, requiring transport through the Las Vegas Metropolitan area. The State of Nevada has been working with the DOE to change this route to avoid the Las Vegas Valley for all radioactive waste shipments to and from the NTS. This principle (the avoidance of the Las Vegas population center) would increase the mileage traveled and require shipments from the east to divert into California on I40 west to I15, turning east to SR 127 and then north to the California-Nevada state line. This places these shipments on a route constructed and maintained to lower standards than the prior route, increases the mileage traveled, and redistributes the risk from Nevada to California.

Supporters: The DOE and the State of Nevada strongly support these routing changes.

Opponents: San Bernardino and Inyo Counties have voiced their opposition to the proposed changes through resolutions. Senators Feinstein and Boxer and Congressmen Lewis and Farr have written letters to the DOE opposing the changes.

Other Information: Staff from the California Energy Commission has been representing California in discussions with the DOE and the State of Nevada on this issue in conjunction with their involvement with the Western Governors Association WIPP Technical Transport Committee. We have coordinated our involvement with District 8.